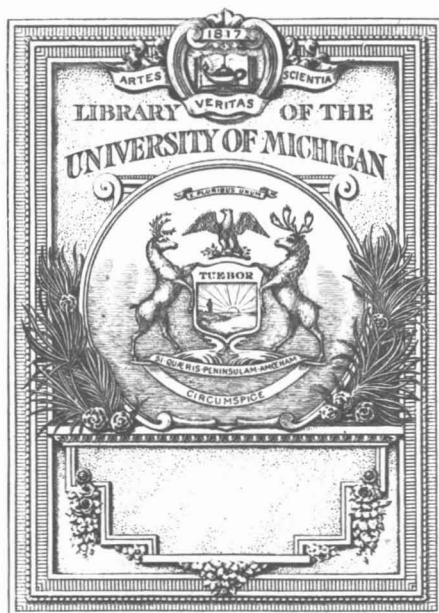


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**BUILDING
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D I A L O G U E S

CONCERNING

INNATE PRINCIPLES.

*This should have been bound
before the Last Dialogue — 1773*

DIALOGUES

CONCERNING

INNATE PRINCIPLES.

CONTAINING

AN EXAMINATION OF MR. LOCKE'S
DOCTRINE ON THAT SUBJECT.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

Barnes, Jackson

THREE DIALOGUES CONCERNING LIBERTY.

*Maximeque æstimare conscientiam mentis suæ, quam ab diis
immortalibus accepimus, quæ à nobis divelli non potest: quæ
fi optimorum consiliorum atque factorum testis in omni vita
nobis erit, sine ullo metu et summa cum honestate vivemus.*

CICERO, Oratio pro et CLUENTIO.

L O N D O N;
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D I A L O G U E S

O N

INNATE PRINCIPLES.

D I A L O G U E I.

AFTER a sultry day, there is something peculiarly grateful and pleasing, said I to my friend, in the cool temperature of the evening-air. Let us, then, take a turn, said he, for this I think is such an evening, and after such a day as you describe. We went out, walking gently on until we reached an agreeable eminence, from whence we contemplated, for some time, the beautifull serenity and clearness of

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the sky; the softness and stillness of the trees; and the pleasing silence which reigned around us, the sun sensibly descending below the horizon on the one hand; and the enlarged moon ascending on the other. Then, moving downwards into a fine vale, we entered under a long row of very lofty trees, whose tops, joining over a neat walk, cast a thick shade within: along the side flowed slowly on, a deep and limpid stream reflecting the moon, which shot sideways through the trees. We soon found ourselves impressed with that pleasing gloom, and sober thoughtfulness, which such scenes do naturally inspire as night approaches.

I do not wonder, said my friend, at what we hear of the dread and terror, with which guilty souls are said to be

frequently stricken, when alone in the dead of night: for how sensibly are we affected by the mild solemnity of this evening scene! How naturally do our minds turn inward upon themselves, pensive and reflecting!

Darkness and silence exclude the exercise of our two most active and diverting senses, sight and hearing. Those pleasing and amusing faculties, being thus rendered inactive, and their power of diverting our thoughts being thus taken away; conscience will make her attacks with superior advantage, and will be found too hard, for impudence to silence, or artifice to keep under. She will shake the weak fabric of a guilty mind to its very foundations. At such times, happy are they who can rejoice in a good conscience; for

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that alone can give our minds due steadiness and constancy.

All this may be true, said I. But if, as Mr. Locke * advances, conscience be *no innate principle*, but only “our own opinion or judgement of the moral rectitude or pravity of our own actions;” and that opinion be formed in us, by the “education, company and customs of our country;” and if “some men can profess, what others avoid, with the same bent of conscience,” even to the committing of the most enormous crimes, “without any remorse at all †:” then, those terrors, which you ascribe to *a guilty*, and that steadiness, which you give to *a good* conscience, cannot be understood to prove any thing to be

* Essay, Octavo, p. 34. † P. 34.

be really good, or evil, in the nature of the things, for which conscience may thus approve or condemn a man : conscience being nothing more, than what every man for himself, fancies it to be ; no *innate*, steady, or general, principle in human nature. True, said he ironically. And so a man may be a confirmed villain, with a clear and good conscience ; and a very honest fellow, with a very bad one. What strange errors do the greatest men sometimes run into !

Even the errors of such men, replied I, are respectable, at least so far, as to deserve the pains of a serious refutation, on account of their great credit, and other extraordinary qualities. I have often heard you disapprove of his arguments against *innate principles*, and

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of his notions concerning morals in general: and I have on that account, very lately read those parts of his essay, which treat of them in particular, and other relative parts: and although I do not find myself convinced by him, yet am I not able, easily, to point out the fallacy of his reasoning on those important subjects. I will now, therefore, beg the favour of you, to shew me wherein you differ from him, if it will not be disagreeable to you. Not at all, replied he, unless the great ingenuity and acuteness of our author should happen to make it so.

Do you, then, interrogated I, maintain the reality of innate principles? I do, answered he in a firm tone; and I hope, for the sake of sound morals and of truth, important objects with
you,

D I A L O G U E I. 7

you, to convince you of that reality. I bowed.—After a long pause, he went on thus.

When I take a general view of the arguments, adduced by Mr. Locke, against innate moral principles; and when I see what he produces, as the most indisputable innate principles, “if any be so;” I am inclined to think, there must have been some very great mistake, as to the true nature of the things in question: for he lays down certain *propositions*, (no matter whether *moral* or *scientific*, so they be but true) and then proves, that such propositions, *considered merely as propositions*, formed by our rational faculty, after due consideration of things, as all true propositions must be, *are not innate*. Nothing more obvious! But

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surely those whom he opposes, must, or ought to have meant, (though I cannot say I have read their arguments, nor do I mean to answer for any one but myself;) not that *the propositions themselves* were innate, but, that *the conscious internal sentiments*, on which such moral propositions are founded, were innate.

He looked on me, interrogatively. I said it might be so, and that I saw a great difference in those things.

Or perhaps, continued he, the mistake may have arisen from following too closely the mode, in which it is necessary to proceed, in order to acquire a knowledge of certain sciences, as in geometry: that is, by laying down some clear and self-evident axioms, or rational propositions. But even here it should be remembered, that in the natures of things,

things, there were *principles*, which had existence, anterior to the formation of these axioms or propositions, and on which *they* are founded, and on which they depend for *their* existence: as, *extension* and *solidity*.—I gave an assenting inclination of the head.

I cannot, therefore, conceive, added he, that what we ought to understand by *innate moral principles*, can by any means, when fairly explained, be imagined to bear any similitude to such propositions as Mr. Locke advances, as bidding fairest to be innate, nor to any other propositions. That is, I cannot conceive, that our innate moral principles; our natural sentiments, or internal conscious feelings; (name them how you please) which we derive, and which result, from our very nature as creatures

creatures morally relative, are at all like unto any propositions whatever.

Who can discover any similitude to any conscious sentiment of the soul, in these strangely irrelative propositions. *Whatever is, is. It is impossible for the same thing to be, and not to be?—* Nobody.—

The innate principles of the soul, continued he, cannot, any more than those of the body, be propositions. They must be in us, antecedently to all our reasonings about them, or they could never be in us at all: for we cannot, by reasoning, create any thing, the principles of which did not exist antecedently. We can, indeed, describe our innate sentiments and perceptions to each other; we can reason, and we can make propositions
about

about them; but our reasonings, neither are, nor can create in us, *moral principles*. They exist prior to, and independently of, all reasoning, and all propositions about them.

When we are told that *benevolence* is *pleasing*; that *malevolence* is *painful*; we are not convinced of these truths by reasoning, nor by forming them into propositions: but by an appeal to the innate internal affections of our souls: and if on such an appeal, we could not feel within the sentiment of benevolence, and the peculiar pleasure attending it; and that of malevolence and its concomitant pain; not all the reasoning in the world could ever make us sensible of them, or enable us to understand their nature. I do not see that it could, said I.

Every

Every being in the universe, continued he, must receive its *principles* from the Divine Creator of all things. The reason of man can create no principles in the natures of things. It will, by proper application, enable him to know many things concerning them, which, without reasoning, he never could have known; and to explain his knowledge, so acquired, to other men: but the *principles* of all created beings are engendered with, and accompany, the existence which they receive from their Creator. And in a point so truly essential as that of morality is to the nature of such a creature as man; God has not left him without innate and ever-inherent principles. He has not left to the imbecility of human reason to create, what he knew it never could
create,

create, and, what we know, it never can create.

Even in the abstracted sciences of arithmetic and geometry, reason can create no principles in the natures of the things treated of. It can lay down axioms, and draw up propositions concerning numbers, extension, and solidity; but numbers, extension, and solidity, existed prior to any reasoning about them.

And here I must observe, that the assent or dissent that we give to propositions in these sciences, which are but little interesting *to our nature*, is drawn from a source widely different from that which we give to *moral* propositions. Thus, when we are told, that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, and see the demonstration;

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demonstration; we say simply, *true*.

That they are equal to three right angles; *false*. These things being irrelative to morals, they move no conscious sentiment, and do therefore only receive our bare assent or dissent as a mere object of sense; in the same manner as when we say a thing is, or is not, black or white, or round or square; we use our eyes, and are satisfied. But the truth or falsehood of moral propositions must be judged of, by another measure; through a more interesting medium: we must apply to our *internal sense*; our divine monitor and guide within; through which, the just and unjust, the right and wrong, the moral beauty and deformity, of human minds, and of human actions, can only be perceived. And this *internal sense*,

sense, must most undoubtedly be *innate*, since, as we have already shewn; it could not otherwise have existence in us; we not being able, by reasoning, or by any other means, to give ourselves any *new sense*; or to create, in our nature, any principle at all. I therefore think Mr. Locke, in speaking of innate *moral* principles, ought, at least, to have made a difference between propositions relative to morals, and those which have no such relation.—He paused.—It seems so, said I: and seeing him ready to say more, I begged he would proceed.—He continued thus.

If we, in this matter, pay any regard to the analogy of nature, can we rationally allow innate principles, or inherent natural laws, to all the beings we have any knowledge of, and deny them to
man

man alone? Were we to consider his soul and body as distinct natures, and not as too intimately united, perhaps, to be easily separated, could we allow innate principles to the body, and none to the soul, but what it must create for itself?—It must be absurd.—It must be absurd to suppose that man, who is utterly incapable of thoroughly understanding the true natures of those principles, by which every other being exists and is actuated; should be left to contrive and create principles, for the conduct of the most refined part of the creation that we are acquainted with; for *the human soul*. Assuredly, as all created beings are endued with certain natural principles, *necessarily innate*, and ever-inherent in them; and which make their several different
natures

natures to be what they are; so man, or the soul of man, cannot, as a created being, exist without innate, and ever-inherent principles.

Seeing he expected a reply; I must confess, said I, that I do not find myself very able to dispute the truth of your doctrine with you; you will, therefore, excuse me, if I call in Mr. Locke to my aid. As you please, said he, smiling.

Mr. Locke then, you know, returned I, has used several ways to prove that we have no innate principles: and though I clearly see that your arguments do make generally against them all; yet I shall be better satisfied, if you will permit me to particularize some of them, if it be only to hear, from you, a refutation of them.—He bowed.—

You know, continued I, Mr. Locke

C advances,

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advances, that principles cannot be innate; unless their ideas be also innate. “ For, says he, if the *ideas* “ be not innate, there was a time “ when the mind was without those “ *principles*; and then they will not “ be innate, but be derived from some “ other original. For where the *ideas* “ themselves are not, there can be no “ knowledge, no assent, no mental or “ verbal *propositions* about them*.”

Now is there nothing in what he advances in this place, that will affect your doctrine of innate principles? I think not, answered he.

For granting that we have *no innate ideas*; it does by no means from thence follow, as he says, that we have *no innate principles*. *Ideas*, simply considered, are very different things, from

innate moral principles; or from any *other principles*, which constitute the natures of things. If I have not already shewn, I will, by and by, endeavour more clearly to shew, that the propositions we compose according to our ideas of things, are *nothing but propositions*: they are not really the *principles* of the things treated of: the principles of the things treated of are naturally inherent, and exist perpetually in them, whether our ideas, or propositions, concerning them, be true or false.

But in the part quoted, there is a fallacy. He says, “ if the *ideas* be not “ innate, there was a time when the “ mind was without those *principles*.” The conclusion, you see, is vague and delusive. The only just conclusion he

could have drawn, was ; that, if the *ideas* be not innate, there was a time, when the mind was without *those ideas, out of which, the propositions are formed*, which I call *principles*. I doubt not, that you perceive, they are very improperly so called, in the present question. For Mr. Locke thus confounds, the principles of our nature, and the ideas contained in the propositions he names, together, as if they were the same things : but they cannot be so, because the one receives existence, from the prior existence of the other. That is, our moral ideas receive *their existence* from the *prior existence* of our innate moral sentiments or principles : as our ideas of light and figure, are derived from the *prior existence* of sight.

In this question, the matter, as too
frequently

frequently happens, has been puzzled and obscured, by the misuse of words. Axioms, and allowed propositions, are called *principles*. But they are *only principles*, formed by the human mind, in aid of its own weakness; which, in reasoning, can proceed but a little way, without proved, or granted, propositions to rest on. They might, perhaps, with much more propriety, be called helps, assistances, or supports to the imbecility of the human mind, than principles of things. The principles, which naturally inhere in every species of created beings, are of a nature, totally different.

It seems, then, said I, that you agree with Mr. Locke, that neither *ideas* or *propositions* can be innate: but you differ from him, by denying any *propositions*

whatsoever, to be properly the *principles* of any species of beings; and by affirming, that both *speculative* and *practical* propositions are mere creatures of human invention: which whether they be true or false; that is, founded in the natures of things or not; the true natures and principles of things remain unalterably the same. That is my meaning, replied he; and that, therefore, most of the arguments advanced by Mr. Locke against innate principles are nothing, or but very little, to the purpose: because they only tend to combat things as innate principles, which are nothing like innate principles; and, if it be not too bold a thing to say of so penetrating a genius, he seems only to have been fighting with a phantom of his own creating.

Indeed,

Indeed, highly as I think of his genius and integrity, I should have much doubted of his sincerity in this doctrine, if we had not frequently seen men of the first rate abilities, suffer themselves to be carried into great absurdities, by their fondness for a favourite system, or, by too hasty a desire of forming a perfect one,

It is certain, however, that nothing can be more excellent than his work as far as it regards our manner of acquiring ideas, by *sensation* and *reflection*. But what should move him to advance, that we have no other way of acquiring ideas; why he should exclude our *moral sense*, and deny even its existence, with the pains of so much acute false reasoning, I shall not, at present, endeavour to explain. But having so deter-

mined, he found it necessary to remove all notions of innate *moral* principles (and with them, all other innate principles) out of the way, in the beginning of his book : for had they been granted, *another source* of ideas must have been admitted, beside those of *sensation* and *reflection*, as explained by Mr. Locke. And I shall not hesitate to affirm, that a clear and indisputable explication of this mode of acquiring ideas, would have cost him much more pains and trouble, than all the rest of his most ingenious work. For human actions and opinions, in the ordinary course of things, pass away in so rapid a succession, as to leave no lasting traces behind them ; nothing fixed, to which we may refer for a renewal, or a correction, of our moral ideas concerning them,

them, if our memory prove deficient. And, unless they be recorded with extraordinary accuracy, they can seldom be contemplated a second time, in precisely the same light, in which they were viewed at the first.

But all those ideas, which arise in our minds, by the impressions which external things make upon our senses, being, derived from objects of fixed and lasting natures; when our memory fails us, or when we doubt the clearness or precision of our ideas, we can, generally, refer with ease to the objects themselves, and can renew, or rectify, our ideas at pleasure. This renders geometry so certain and indisputable a science: for, the least variation or incorrectness in our ideas, may be discovered and corrected, by recurring to the figures

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figures themselves, which, through the medium of sight, convey, invariably, the same ideas to the mind. Nor is there any impediment; any thing naturally interesting to our affections, in the nature of the things themselves, that should make us see them falsely, or apply them irrationally.

But it is not so in moral science; it more closely concerns, and is more deeply interesting to us, in every point of view: it therefore throws more impediments in our way, to a right understanding and clear comprehension of its truths. Our early-imbibed prejudices, mis-placed affections, ill-governed passions, and jarring interests, distort and falsify our ideas in moral subjects extremely, nor can a just and natural representation of our moral sentiments,
or

or feelings, take place in our minds, until those delusive, and turbulent, enemies to moral truth, be subdued, or properly corrected. And although to men whose affections and passions are duly tempered, and minds naturally adjusted, moral truths may be as clear as mathematical ones; yet, from the unhappy circumstances above-mentioned, they are generally much more clouded and obscured; and are, therefore, perpetually subjected to tedious and unpleasant disputations: a very untoward and disgusting circumstance without a doubt*. But which you think, replied I, not enough so, to have caused Mr. Locke to deny the existence of *innate moral principles*; things,

* Mr. Locke, in Essay, Vol. II. pages 174 to 177. has clearly pointed out the difficulty of fixing with precision the meanings of moral words.

things, so essentially interesting to the cause of virtue : and which, you consider as a source of ideas, not comprehended in what he understands by *sensation* and *reflection*. And are not you of the same mind ? interrogated he, in a lively tone. At present I am, answered I ; but yet I must beg, with Mr. Locke, to be more clearly informed concerning the nature of those innate principles * : for, says he, “ nobody has yet ventured to “ give a catalogue of them.”

By the demand of a catalogue of them, said my friend, he seems only to expect a string of moral maxims or *propositions* : but these, we have agreed, with him, are not *innate principles* : we have agreed, that they are not *properly* principles of things at all. But, before we attempt to explain farther,

* Essay, p. 39.

what

what we mean by innate moral principles, it may not be improper to endeavour to define, what we would be understood to signify by the word *principle*, so far, at least, as it regards our present inquiry: though, perhaps, when we come to speak of *any innate principle*, after describing it, as well as we can, we may be allowed to say, what Mr. Locke says of the faculty of *perception*, which I presume is *innate**, viz.

“Whoever reflects on what passes in
 “his own mind, cannot miss it; and
 “if he does not reflect, all the words
 “in the world cannot make him have
 “any notion of it†.” So, our moral principles being innate, and of a simple nature; when we would describe the sensations, or sentiments they produce in us; if by turning men’s minds in-

ward

* P. 105. † See also, p. 185. Chap. XX.

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ward upon their own feelings, we cannot make them perceive what they are; words, in any other view will be vain and useless, Yet in essentials, all men must be sensible of them, and capable of perceiving them, clearly enough, in plain, practical cases, for all the good purposes of human life: except, indeed, such persons as Mr. Locke very strangely, not to say preposterously, selects, as the most likely to preserve a pure and perfect sense of them: viz. idiots, infants, and madmen—He was going to proceed, in the definition of his meaning by the word *principle*, when finding we were just at home, he declined it till another opportunity; to which, I assented, on a promise, that it should be early next morning. And thus ended our first dialogue.

DIALOGUE

D I A L O G U E II.

ON retiring to my chamber, reflecting on the discourse of my friend; I found my mind impressed with a pleasing satisfaction and composure; and, somewhat disburthened of that uncertainty and confusion, which the arguments against innate principles produce, in moral subjects. It is, certainly, highly inimical to the cause of virtue, to introduce doubts concerning the existence of moral principles. If the mind do not perceive such principles to be fixed, and general in human nature; and, not ever fluctuating, and varying, according to times, circumstances, customs, fashions,
and

and opinions ; it cannot, rationally, depend upon any principles at all. It must remain ever perplexed and wavering, and utterly devoid of that stability, and that mental determination, which are the principal supports of all virtuous atcheivements. That manly firmness and constancy, which is so necessary in all great and worthy designs, and which is the effect of a generous affection for truth and justice, requires steady and invariable principles to support it in us. It should seem, therefore, much more consonant to the character of genuine philosophy, to endeavour, to strengthen and confirm the mind, in just principles ; than, to puzzle and confound it, with difficulties and vain objections. For, though, the human understanding may be, nay
must

must be, incapable of solving many difficulties in the natures of things: yet to stick to those difficulties tenaciously, and to apply them continually, to prove the uncertainty of our knowledge, and to leave us perplexed and confounded, is, doubtless, but a very untoward, left-handed, kind of philosophy. In her genuine course, she leads us gently on as far as our understandings will carry us, and we can see our way clearly: when difficulties occur, (and they must frequently occur, in works formed by infinite wisdom, when examined by such minds as ours) she shews us their nature and extent, and explains them, (if at all explicable) as well, and as far as she can; continually keeping in view, the nature of man, and his true

D interest

interest and proper business upon earth.

In the morning, I rose with the sun, and traversed the garden, waiting with impatience the rising of my friend. It was not long, (though I thought it so) before he came down, and joined me, with a smile, in one of the walks. After taking a turn or two, and discoursing lightly on the beauties of the objects around us; I reminded him of his promise, and of the subject, with which he concluded his discourse, the preceding evening. Your demand is just, said he: and after musing a short time, he began thus.

In all subjects of reasoning, we can never be too careful, in fixing the meaning of our words; especially of those words, on the clear understanding of which, the knowledge of the matter

matter in question principally depends. We will therefore endeavour to explain our ideas of the word *principles*, as employed in our present inquiry, with as much precision as we can.

I humbly conceive, then, continued he, that no thing, or being, in the universe, could possibly exist, or be what it is, without certain necessarily-inherent, qualities, properties, energies, or laws ; which together form and constitute its nature, and cause it to be specifically what it is. These necessarily-inherent, qualities, properties, energies, or laws, whatever names they may be called by, are what I would now be understood to signify by the word *principles*, as being *prime*, or *first*, in the constituting of the natures of all things. Thus all the animal crea-

D 2 tion,

tion, all the vegetable, have their *general*, and their *specific*, principles. Earth, water, air, fire, have their *principles*. The earth, as *a whole* in itself, or, as *a part* in our planetary system, has its *principles*. Our planetary system as *a whole*, or, as *relative* to other systems, or to the universe, has its *principles*. The universe, as *a whole*, must also have its *principles*, by which, all its parts are made relative, and are chained and united together; though in a manner totally incomprehensible by any, but its all-wise and all-powerful Creator. But of Him, the great first cause! the principle of all principles! Of Him, from whom, the whole universe, and all that it contains, derive their principles, what shall we say, or how speak, with propriety? So weak, so incompetent,

incompetent, are we, that we are lost in the contemplation of his nature; and hardly know how to discourse of him with tolerable sense, or without absurdity, and danger of impiety and profanation.—I bowed assentingly.—However, we may truly say, continued he, that, with regard to the relation we stand in to God, and to his concatenated creation, we cannot possibly serve him better, or render him juster worship, than by paying the strictest attention to those *innate principles*, with which he has endued our nature; and by which, he has clearly pointed out (if we suffer not our attention to be diverted by false lights) our road to what is most eligible and best, both in our *moral* and *physical* conduct in this life.

After a short pause, seeing me deeply engaged in reflection, I speak of these things, said he, only to explain my meaning, by the word *principles*, in its most extensive sense: but with all due consciousness of human imbecility, when we presume to discourse concerning things of infinite extent. But I take such to be the notions we must naturally, and do most usually, entertain of the *One* general or universal principle, whenever we think attentively or rationally about Him. Yet still we must observe, that we are not capable of attaining any *certain knowledge* of the *true nature* of such a principle: we can only perceive it as a cause, by the effects, but, we know not how it causes.—He looked on me.—I do not object, said I.—Then we will descend
a little,

a little, continued he; for our minds are better adapted to more confined views, and to the consideration of parts, than of the whole, of the creation.

In nature, things are distinguished from each other, and are arranged into *kinds* and *species*, and we do no more, than follow her, in so considering them. The general laws, by which, every *kind* exists, and is moved and actuated; are the *general principles* of that *kind*. The particular laws, by which, every *species* exists *differently*, and is moved and actuated *differently*, from its kind; are its particular, or *specific, principles*. Thus every *kind*, and *species*, of beings, have *principles* naturally inherent in them. True, said I; but do we know what those principles are, or how they act in them, so as to produce the

D 4 varieties,

varieties, which we see in their natures? Perhaps not, replied he; for, of the principles of beings without us, we can only judge by the perceptible effects, which they exhibit: nor can their *true internal nature and manner of acting*, be ever understood by us, any farther than by conjecture, from the effects they produce. Yet are we certain of the necessary existence of such principles in their natures, as cause the production of such differences and distinctions, as mark the various kinds and species. A farther knowledge, it seems, was not designed for man: nor, indeed, does it appear to me, that it would be, either useful or convenient, in our present state, and short duration here: it would only draw us more, from our true and proper business;
from

from the study of ourselves, and of the nature of our *kind*: from which, we already find, but too many frivolous occasions to wander. It has long been an applauded fashion, to make collections, and to roam abroad in search of rarities and monsters for others to gaze at; indulging a sort of idle industry, and vain curiosity, concerning things, but little relative, or, perhaps quite foreign, to our nature: and such trifling, is dignified with the honourable names of learning and knowledge. So much engaged *without doors*, however, it cannot be, but our affairs, *at home* must suffer; and our most interesting concerns lie neglected. For, though I do, by no means, agree with those, who think, the most difficult of all knowledge, is the knowledge of ourselves;

ourselves : yet, I am very certain, that men, whose minds are continually employed in extraneous subjects of science ; or in those amusing external arts, which are irrelative to moral life ; are, but very rarely, even tolerable proficients, in the home-science. Indeed, it is not to be expected, that a man should be skilful in an art, which he has never allowed himself time to think of, or leisure to attend to.

I am very sensible of the fashionable folly, said I ; and know, very well, at how cheap a rate, literary distinctions are purchased : and I must agree, with you, that a mind much addicted to extraneous researches, is not likely to be very well informed at home : but I should be glad to know, why you think, the attainment of a knowledge of ourselves, is less difficult than commonly imagined ?

gined? I do not think, replied he, that any kind of knowledge can be acquired without attention and study: but, the knowledge we may attain of our own nature, and principles, is more clear and more certain, comes to us easier and with better evidence, than we can possibly acquire concerning the nature and principles of any other creatures. What man can doubt, that it is more easy for him, to know himself, than it is for him, to know any other man; or, than it is, for any other man to know him? If a man be incapable of knowing himself, a subject, with which he is so intimately, so sensibly, united; whose principles, sentiments, perceptions, thoughts, and designs, he can always inspect, and know without disguise, whenever he
pleases

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pleases to view them impartially ; I say, if he be incapable of knowing himself, with the aid of so much previous, clear, intelligence; how much more incapable must he be, of knowing, any other man, whose thoughts and designs, he cannot be so sure of; or, any other creature, whose nature and true principles, can never, with certainty, be known to him? In short, the truth is this, that unless a man be a tolerable adept in the knowledge of himself, and can perceive all the various turnings and windings of the human affections and passions, and their effects in his own heart; he can have no rule or measure, by which, he may form, and regulate, his judgement, concerning the actions and intentions of others. I think you are right, said I.—It is probably,

probably, therefore, a truer maxim, continued he, to say, that it is easier for a man to know himself, than to know any other man, or any other creature: and that, a man's knowledge of other men, and of other creatures; will very much increase, as he advances in the knowledge of himself, and of his own nature. For his most rational conjectures, concerning the natures of other animals, are principally founded on what he is conscious of in himself, as an animal. —He saw I did not incline to object. — Let us, then, digress no farther, said he; but return to our subject.

There is another kind of principles, which is intirely of human creation, and which, can only, with propriety, be called *principles*, as they are the *beginnings* of human reasoning. These usually

usually pass under the denominations of, data, axioms, maxims, rules, &c. They are invented and formed, by the human mind, in aid of its own imbecility. They are foundations, which it finds itself obliged to lay, before it can proceed, in the reasoning art, to the building of any considerable structure. They may be solid, or sandy; true, or false. In proportion to *their* truth or falsehood, will be the *stability*, or *instability*, of the structure we raise upon them. In short, they are merely inventions of the human mind, to facilitate its own progress in the search of less evident, and more important truths; or, to enable us to prove to others (granting them to be true) that some other propositions must be true, which had been denied, or, of which there
 seemed

seemed to be some doubt. But it is important to the matter we, at present, have in view, to remember, that, this sort of principles, can only be called *principles*, relatively to the human mind, in the exercise of its reasoning faculty ; and that, the true and genuine principles of things, which are formed and constituted in their natures, neither are, nor are at all like unto, those data, axioms, rules, or maxims, of human invention ; but exist quite independently of, and prior to any such things.—Well, said I, but what do you infer from all this ?—Why, do you not see, answered he, that all the *principles*, which Mr. Locke advances and refutes, as innate (if any, says he, can be so) are of this latter kind ?—I do, returned I : but what then ?—Why,

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Why, then, said he, Mr. Locke, with the greatest respect be it spoken, has very much mis-spent his time and pains; having only proved, that certain data or maxims, are not *innate principles* of the human nature: which, I hope you now perceive, (though true) was nothing to the purpose; the innate principles of our nature, and such data or maxims being quite different things.—They seem so, indeed, replied I; and I perceive, by your explication, that data or axioms, are of human invention, but that the principles, which constitute the natures of things, are of divine origin. But, permit me to trouble you a little farther. If certain moral maxims, be found to be indisputably just, and agreeable to the true interests and happiness of mankind
(though

(though of human invention merely) may they not serve us in the regulation of our conduct as effectually, as any innate principles whatever? Or, in other words, is not our reason given us, to supply, in some degree, the place of innate moral principles?

This, returned he, is what Mr. Locke would have us to understand; but, most certainly, it cannot be so: for, as we have shewn before, we are not able, by reasoning, to create principles in things. The principles of all things exist in them, before we begin to reason about them; or they never could be made to exist at all, by any human power.

Our reason must always have some foundation to build upon; that foundation must exist, before we begin to

E reason,

the theory of ideas.
2^d edition. 1713. 68

reason, or we could not reason at all.

We can neither perceive, or understand, any thing as a subject of reasoning, whose principles do not exist prior to our reasoning. Thus, *moral maxims*, when true, must be founded on *some principles* in the human nature, which are originally inherent in man: and our reasoning, in the formation of *such maxims*, must be regulated, by those *originally-inherent principles*. Had we not such principles innate, or born with us, our reason could have no ground to go upon, concerning morals: for, reasoning could never make a man, devoid of innate moral principles, perceive the justice or truth of any moral maxim. Indeed, without such principles, he could never know any thing at all of moral maxims: for when
any

any moral maxim is proposed to us, we can neither understand it, or examine into its truth or falsehood, without referring to our internal touchstone, our innate moral sentiments; they alone enable us to understand it; and by them only, can we judge of its truth or falsehood: for its truth or falsehood to us, depends intirely upon its agreement or disagreement with them.—My feelings, said I, will not permit me to contradict you. But Mr. Locke, you know, rather triumphantly, demands a catalogue of these principles, which, he says, no one “has ventured yet to give.” I understand you, replied he: you desire to know what I have to say upon that subject. I do, returned I.

You know, then, continued he, that when Mr. Locke demands a catalogue

of *innate principles*, he means a catalogue of *propositions*, such as he had before proved to be not *innate*; and such as you and I have agreed, cannot properly be called *principles of our nature* at all. These, therefore, can be but little to our present purpose. But, nevertheless, we have innate moral principles, which do not consist of propositions or maxims; but of internal sentiments, or conscious feelings, prior to all moral maxims; and without which (as you have seen) morals could have no foundation in nature, nor could be understood.

All right and wrong, just and unjust, which concern the nature, and the happiness of man, is perceived by him, through what is innate, and formed in him in the very constitution
of

of his nature; or he could never perceive, or understand them at all.

If any one require *a catalogue*, or rather an exact description of these innate internal sentiments; I can only tell him what I feel within myself; and describe to him, how the actions of men, and how the relations of their actions, when I hear or read them, affect my nature, and move my conscious feelings. Nor can he have any other rule, of judging of the truth or falsehood of my sentiments, but by reference to his own conscience, by which only, it is possible for him to form any rational judgement.

Mr. Locke * himself does not think a better explanation can be given of any simple perception, or idea, than

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* Vol. II. page 28, &c.

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that we do perceive it: which is as much as to say, thus I am impressed by the object; thus it affects me; how are you impressed? how does it affect you? This doctrine, you see, supposes, that all men being of the same kind, have the same natural principles in them, (with the degrees only of more or less perfect) and that, therefore, their perceptions must be the same, or very nearly the same: and, indeed, were they not so, they could never understand each others meaning.

We do not, therefore, contend about *innate moral principles*, as if they were *innate propositions*, or *innate ideas*; but as principles naturally inherent in mankind, which being excited to action, raise in our minds *ideas*, and concerning which we can make *propositions*.

We

We can describe them to each other, and can compare our feelings and perceptions of them together, as we can those of sight, or of any other sense. But take away the *innate principles, the sight, and the moral sense*, and every one perceives, that neither reasoning, argumentation, explanation, or description, in short, that no human contrivance can possibly make the blind-man understand, any thing, concerning objects of sight; or the unconscious man, any thing concerning moral truths. If our conscience, or moral sense, were not born with us, we, most certainly, never could be made to feel or understand any thing concerning morals; nor could we ever reason at all about them: we should be intirely ignorant of any such thing.

You must now, no doubt, perceive, continued he, how absurd it would be, to demand a *catalogue* of our innate moral principles when the true nature of them is rightly understood. It would be to demand a catalogue of all the conscious sentiments, excited in us, in all the various actions and circumstances, which occur to us in human life; in which right or wrong, just or unjust, moral beauty or deformity, are concerned. It were as reasonable to demand a catalogue of all the various sensations excited in us, by the operations of outward things, on our other senses. The only rational attempt to describe, or give a catalogue, of our innate moral principles, would be to copy the purer sentiments of the best moralists, who have, with the soundest heads, justly and

and naturally depicted, the conscious sentiments of the worthiest hearts: which would be no more, than if, being curious in vision and the nature of sight, we were to consult the ablest masters in optics, and were to give a catalogue of their experiments and opinions in that science. But rather, than you should have that trouble, said I, we will talk no more of *a catalogue*. He smiled; and after a short silence, he proceeded to shew, that conscience, or innate moral principles, must be the same in all men.

You know, said he, that Mr. Locke himself, presuming that creatures of the same species, are endued with powers, faculties, or *inborn* principles, (though he will not say *innate*) which are the same, in every individual

dual of the species, *not defective* ; seems not to doubt, that the simple ideas conveyed to the mind by the senses, (though inexplicable by words) are the same in all men ; or so far the same, as to enable them, very well, to understand each others meaning. And this, no doubt, is true, with the exception of more or less perfect faculties ; and consequently, of more clear or more obscure, more extensive or more confined, ideas : for, were it not true, individuals could no more understand each other, than if they were creatures of quite *different species*. If their natural faculties had not a very strong similarity ; if the manner of their operation were not very much the same ; how could they possibly, nearly penetrate each others thoughts, or con-

ceive ideas, enough similar, to enable them to hold any communication?

But, this being allowed, it must equally hold in our innate moral principles, which, though as to strength, or weakness, clearness or obscurity, they be somewhat diversified in different men; yet they must be so much of the *same nature*, as to differ only in *degree*, not in *kind*; otherwise, we could hold no intelligible conversation about morals.—Certainly not, said I.

How very inconsistent then, continued he, is the doctrine advanced by Mr. Locke, when he says, that conscience “is nothing else but *our own* “*opinion, or judgement*”, of the moral “rectitude or pravity of our own “actions. And if conscience be a

“proof

“ proof of innate principles, *contraries*

“ may be innate principles: since

“ some men, *with the same bent of con-*

“ *science*, prosecute what others avoid.”

If this were true, if there were nothing internally the same; nothing common, and *inborn* in the human species, concerning moral rectitude or pravity; but if every individual, in that point, were distinct, and a species in himself; and could form moral sentiments, which might, or might not, according to accidents or his own fancy, have relation to, or correspondence with, those of other men; all intelligible communication on that subject must cease; and all the doctrines of morality, among creatures thus distinct and irrelative, must, not only, be impertinent and incomprehensible to each other;

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other ; but must remain utterly devoid of that general nature, or those specific qualities, which only, could render such doctrines useful to us, as creatures of the same kind, nature, and constitution.

All those faculties, qualities, or properties, continued he, which are comprised in the formation and constitution of an individual, of any species of creatures, must be comprehended in every individual of the *same* species, *not defective*; otherwise he cannot be deemed to be of the *same* species, but of *another*. And, if any individual be born *defective*, or, without some faculty or property common to his species; (as we have shewn of the blind man) of things acquirable by, or relative to, that faculty, he can receive

receive no knowledge from, nor have any intelligible communication with, those who are not so defective.

Unless those faculties and qualities, which constitute a species, were the same in every individual of that species, that consent of nature, or sympathetic charm, which arises from the sameness of our feelings ; and which draws together and unites the individuals of every species ; could have no existence. They could by no other means, than by the identity of the principles of their nature, be thus inclined towards each other : nor could they by any other means, conceive any thing of each other's nature, any more than if each individual were a distinct species.

If all men, then, be of the same species ; all the faculties, qualities, or properties,

properties, which go to the constituting or making of a man, must be the *same* in all men. That they are the *same* is clear, because men do understand each other, when they converse together concerning them: they differ (as we have said) only in degree. Now, conscience must be of this number; it is a quality, or property common to human nature, and must be the *same* in all men, like every other quality or property; varying only in the degrees, of stronger or weaker, clearer or more obscure. Men understand each other when they speak of conscience, which, were it not the *same* in all, they could not do. It is, therefore, the *same* in all men; or it is nothing that can be useful to them.

If conscience were, as Mr. Locke pretends,

pretends, only the *opinion* or *judgement* of every individual, concerning the moral rectitude, or pravity of his own actions ; and if those opinions and judgements be various, and even *contrary*, as he allows and thinks he proves, it could be no natural, general, principle of the species : but men, in point of conscience, would be, naturally, quite irrelative to each other : and every individual would be a distinct species ; and could no more judge of the conscience of another man, than he could of the conscience of any being, whose nature was totally unlike his own.

But our opinions or judgements cannot make or constitute any principle in our nature. If I have an opinion, or if I judge, that any thing will be good

good for, or pleasing to, my nature ; which, on experiment, proves evil, and displeasing ; my opinion or judgement cannot make it otherwise. Our opinions may be lightly taken up, ill-grounded, and false : but the principles of our nature, are the work of infinite wisdom ; deep-rooted, and invariably true. And though, at the expence of our own misery and vexation, we may thwart and oppose them, yet, they can never be eradicated by any power of ours ; nor can their nature be changed, by our erroneous opinions and judgements.

Mr. Locke, I remember, continued he, seems to think the argument conclusive, against innate moral principles, when he shews us, that, all our *ideas*, included in the *propositions* which he

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calls

calls moral principles, are *acquired*. But this is not going to the bottom of the matter in question. Mr. Locke always carefully avoids the use of the word *innate*, whenever he names any of the principles, or faculties, by which we acquire our ideas of things. Yet, I think, he somewhere, has called them *in-born*, in the Essay. And in his Treatise of Civil Government he finds it hard to avoid innate principles; and he talks of *the principles of human nature*, more than once.

He likens the mind to a piece of white paper, ready to receive any characters or impressions. He informs us, that through the medium of the senses, the mind is impressed, and receives such ideas as they convey: we have therefore no *innate ideas*. True.

But

But can he justly say, we have, therefore, no *innate principles*? Certainly not. For *ideas*, and *innate principles*, are not the same things. *Ideas* are only the produce, and arise in consequence, of *innate principles*.—Are not our senses *innate*, through which we perceive those ideas? Is not the mind itself *innate*, which perceives them?—Most undoubtedly. And to object, that they are dormant and useless, until they be excited to action, is frivolous: for, so are our hands, our feet, and all our members, and faculties; yet who can deny them to be *innate*, or born with us?

Through the senses, which are undoubtedly *innate*, we receive ideas of external things: through the *moral sense*, no less certainly *innate*, we receive ideas concerning moral things.

Any one, born without sight, cannot have the least idea of the objects of sight. Any one, born without innate moral principles, or a moral sense, cannot have any ideas of moral subjects. Reasoning would be as vain and useless, in the one case, as in the other. Reasoning cannot give sight to the blind: reasoning cannot give a moral sense, to those born without one,—it must be innate, or it cannot be at all.

While I was expressing my satisfaction with my friends arguments, and going to extend my enquiries farther; some company arrived, who joined us, and continued with us till after dinner.

D I A L O G U E III.

TOWARDS the evening, our company took their leave of us : and my friend and I, according to our custom walked in the adjacent fields ; where, on the first opportunity I renewed the conversation, in which we were interrupted, in the morning.

You will excuse me, said I, though, perhaps, by this time, I ought to be fully satisfied of the existence of *innate moral principles* ; if I still continue to trouble you, with a few more of Mr. Locke's objections, which are thought to carry some weight with them.—He smiled assent.—You know what stress,

Mr. Locke *, lays upon the want of universal consent to those *propositions*, which he gives us for *innate moral principles*, if any be so. I do replied he. But, as I think we agreed, that *propositions* were not *innate principles*, nor any way familiar to them; it should seem, what he hath said upon that head, cannot be much to our present purpose. However, continued he, it may not be improper to say somewhat on that subject, if it be only to endeavour to shew, what sort of universality it is reasonable to expect in human nature: and in this, I think, Mr. Locke will materially help us out.

But to facilitate our inquiry, it will be proper, to explain, more strictly, the sense of some words, which we already have used, and may again frequently

* Essay XXVI. p. 20. 30, and 31.

quently use, in the course of it. I mean the words, *conscience*, *moral sense*, and, *innate moral principles*; which, I think, have been, and may be, generally used promiscuously, as significant of the same things.

By these words, then, I mean, an *innate sense*, implanted in our nature, as *moral agents*, by the great Creator of all things: by which, we are made *sensible*, of the right and wrong, of the just and unjust, of the moral beauty and deformity, of human actions and of human minds: and, to which we must refer, *as to the only true criterion*, in all our reasonings that concern, the just rights of mankind, the natural and moral obligations we are under to others, and to ourselves, and, in general, the moral happiness or misery of the human species.

Now I know of no objections against the universal existence of this *moral sense* in mankind, which do not lie equally against the universal existence of all our other senses. Total want, and privation, are objections, as far as they extend: but imperfection or defectiveness, is no objection against the universality of *the existence* of our senses. Sight and hearing are possessed by men from the greatest human perfection, down to the most imperfect and defective. Blindness and deafness are the only exceptions against the universality of sight and hearing. Conscience also, is naturally inherent in all mankind: but, as in the senses of sight and hearing, with various degrees of sensibility and clearness, it may descend, from the greatest perfection, down to the most defective
dullness,

dullness. But, like the sense of feeling, it seems to be so closely inherent in us ; that it is hard to conceive, how a living man can be *totally* deprived of it. *Idiotism*, and *madness*, may disable him, for perceiving its effects ; and in *infancy* he may be incapable ; for good reasons, which will be shewn hereafter : and these are the only exceptions against its universality in human nature : but they are not exceptions against the universality of its *existence* ; they are only exceptions against the universal *perception* of it.—I believe you are right, said I : but do you not think it an objection to this moral sense, that men are not equally quick and fine in their feelings of it's operations and effects ?—It certainly can be no objection to it's *existence*, replied he ; any more, than to the
the

the existence of the other senses.—But do you, then, suppose, interrogated I, that the perspicacity, or dullness, of the conscience, or moral sense, bears any proportion to the strength or weakness of our mental faculties?—I really cannot say, answered he, what proportion they may bear to each other: but I know, that our *perception* of the effects of conscience, as well, as, of the effects of the other senses, will be clear or otherwise, according to the strength or weakness of our understandings. This is a matter of daily and continual experience. And, indeed, it is one very rational way of accounting, for the seemingly great diversity of men's thoughts and opinions; which certainly does not arise from any difference in their natural principles, (only in the degrees

degrees of more or less perfect) or from any natural difference in their way of perceiving things ; but, from the clearness or obscurity, strength or weakness of their mental abilities. — But, does not this argument, demanded I, make against the *efficacy* of the *conscience*, as a moral guide? — No more replied he, than it does, against the *efficacy* of the *other senses*, for their several uses.

For my part, continued he, I do not pretend to fathom the depths of infinite wisdom. I do not, therefore, ask, why every principle of our nature is not precisely and universally the same, as to measure and degree, in the whole species. I perceive, as to measure and degree, that every principle differs in almost every individual : and I also

perceive, that there is an *universality*, *in the kind, and nature*, of every principle, given by the Deity to the whole human species: and indeed to every other species of creatures; notwithstanding those differences in degree.

That every single animal of the same species differs from others, does not so far shock me, as to make me conclude, that the principles of their nature, are not the *same in kind*. Much less does it affect me, in the human species, when I consider man as a rational creature in *a higher degree*; as a free agent in point of morals, indued with innate conscious principles; and as the elector and chuser of his own moral happiness or misery. For surely, whoever will consider these distinctions; what they are in us; and how we are
affected

affected by them, cannot be much surpris'd to find more diversity in men, than in any other kind of creatures, whose natures are restrained to instincts, and who are incapable of any degree of moral free agency.

To be calling out, therefore, for universality of consent, on these occasions, seems to me, to be only taking an unfair advantage of the almost inexplicable diversity, to be found in human minds, and in human actions; with which any acute man, if he please, may puzzle others and himself. But amidst all this diversity, when we *candidly* survey the conduct of our species, we can easily perceive them to be actuated, generally and universally, by the same natural principles. And, indeed, as we have seen, if it were
not

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not so, they could not sympathize; there could be no consent of natures in them; nor could they ever understand each others meaning at all.

But, as I have said, Mr. Locke himself will materially help us out, in this argument. Then taking, the Essay on Human Understanding, out of his pocket, he turned to page 139, and read as follows:

“ The knowing precisely what our
 “ words stand for, would, I imagine *,
 “ in this, as well as a great many
 “ other cases, end the dispute. For I
 “ am apt to think that men, when they
 “ come to examine them, find their
 “ simple *ideas* all generally to agree,
 “ though in discourse with one ano-
 “ ther, they perhaps confound one
 “ another

* See also p. 185 and 330.

“ another with different names. I
 “ imagine, that men who abstract their
 “ thoughts, and do well examine the
 “ *ideas* of their own minds, *can-*
 “ *not much differ in thinking*; how-
 “ ever they may perplex them-
 “ selves with words, according to the
 “ way of speaking of the several
 “ schools or sects they have been bred
 “ up in: though amongst unthinking
 “ men, who examine not scrupulously
 “ and carefully their own *ideas*, and
 “ strip them not from the marks men
 “ use for them, but confound them
 “ with words, there must be endless
 “ dispute, wrangling and jargon, espe-
 “ cially if they be learned bookish men
 “ devoted to some sect, and accustomed
 “ to the language of it; and have
 “ learned to talk after others. But if
 “ it

“ it should happen, that any two
 “ thinking men should really have dif-
 “ ferent *ideas*, I do not see how they
 “ could discourse or argue one with
 “ another.” Here, it seems, said he,
 Mr. Locke does not see how men,
 could discourse or argue together, un-
 less their simple ideas were *the same*.
 Nor do I. But their simple ideas,
 cannot be *the same*, unless their *senses*,
 through which they are perceived, be
the same. If the *senses* be *the same*,
 the universality of the senses can have
 no exceptions, but those we have already
 named. And, if we have proved the
 existence of *a moral sense* necessary, (as
 I think we have, from the impossibility
 of men’s discoursing intelligibly about
 morals without it) there can be no
 objections to its universality, but those
 we

we have mentioned. You are doubtless in the right, said I ; yet you know, Mr. Locke has been pleased to advance, that if we had any innate moral principles, infants, idiots, and madmen, would be more clearly sensible of them than other people ; because, less corrupted by habits, and by the prejudices and customs of the world.—He has so, replied he : but here it can be of no force ; because Mr. Locke's *moral principles*, as I must again repeat, were only *moral propositions*. According to our explication and ideas of *innate moral principles*, nothing can be more absurd. Would it not be as reasonable to say, that, *infants* by their helpless ignorance and inexperience ; that *idiots*, by their total want of understanding and capacity ; and that *madmen*, by the

distracted and disorder of their minds ; are in a better condition on these accounts, to distinguish nicely, and to judge accurately, of their sensations, and moral sentiments ? In truth, minds thus situated, are too weak, or too confused and distracted, to be able to judge, or even to be sensible, of their own helpless and miserable condition.

But as Mr. Locke denies, that we have any innate moral principles at all ; he supposes and assumes, what he can neither suppose or assume of any other principle of our nature : he supposes, that if we have any innate principles of morality, they must not only be *born with us* ; but they must be born with us, ready moulded and formed into such evident and indisputable *propositions*, as no man can deny. This is strange.

Do

Do we say, that the sense of hearing is not innate, because we are not born perfectly accomplished in music? Do we infer, that our sight is not innate, because we are not born opticians?—Certainly not. Why, then, should we presume, that our conscience is not innate, because we are not born moral philosophers? If, to the sight, to the hearing, and to the other senses, time and experience be allowed necessary; and if, to adjust properly the ideas and thoughts they convey to us, understanding, attention, and judgement be wanting; why may we not, as reasonably, allow, the same time and experience; the same understanding, attention, and judgement, to be requisite to the nature and proper conduct of our

innate moral sense? — It seems reasonable, answered I.

In the imbecility of infancy, and giddiness of childhood, continued he, we are but poorly qualified, for making nice observations on our sensations and ideas of any sort : but much less on those of the moral kind ; because the nature of our condition is, then, such as scarcely, if at all, places us in the circumstances of moral agents. In infancy, it is out of the question : and in childhood, there are but few calls for the exercise of conscience, which is wisely ordered, for then we have but little judgement to observe its effects. God has naturally placed us, at these times, and much longer, under the care and tuition of parents ; clearly indicating thereby, our inexperience and
want

want of capacity to govern ourselves. In short, in morals, as in every thing else, our knowledge is progressive : and whoever desires to be a proficient in that science, will find, that experience, application, and good sense, are, at least, as requisite, as they are to the learning of any other inferior art or science. Nor does the nature and circumstances of human life, by any means, require, what Mr. Locke assumes to be necessary as an evidence of innate moral principles, i. e. that they should be *so born with us*, as to be instantaneously perceptible in the forms of indisputably true propositions. For though all our faculties of mind and body, be born with us ; yet, as the most perfect use, and highest perfection, of any one of them, is not naturally requisite, or

useful, in infancy or childhood ; God having created both our minds and bodies in a progressive, and not in a perfect or full grown, state ; to object against any one of them, as not innate, because it is not born with us, perfect or full-grown ; is only to object against it, because it is not, what it was never intended to be : and the same objection may, as reasonably, be made against the innateness of every part or faculty of a man's body. Your senses may be as strong, as clear, and as perfect, as ever human senses were ; your *moral sense*, may be as true, and as just ; and though all be innate, yet is the knowledge acquired by them progressive ; and perfected, if ever perfected, by slow degrees : nor do I see the least reason for excluding the *moral sense* out of this

predicament. For my part, I can perceive nothing in all this, but what is intirely natural, and quite consonant to the condition and circumstances of humanity. Here he paused.—I cannot dissent from you, said I. Yet, you know, Mr. Locke speaks of soldiers in armies *, and even of whole nations, whom, he supposes to be entirely devoid of conscience or any moral sentiment. He does so, replied he, but that is but a continuation of the same error; and must be answered by the same kind of reasoning we have already employed; of which, perhaps, by this time, you have heard more than enough. I assured him of his mistake, and begged him to proceed; and he continued thus.

* Essay p. 34.

If there were really whole nations, as Mr. Locke contends *, (confiding in the wonderful stories of marvellous travellers) that coolly, deliberately, and *without any remorse at all*, could destroy their own children; and if such actions, were not the effects, of some gloomy and horrid superstitions; of some very pressing fears of shame or want; or, of some corrupt affections, or violent and unruly passions; it would certainly be a very extraordinary phenomenon: and so very contrary to the nature and conduct of every other species of creatures in the world, that we know of; that it would be a very odious and disgraceful peculiarity, in that species of animals, which has been generally esteemed, the noblest upon earth.

I must own, my nature shudders, when I read, what Mr. Locke seems to describe with so much coldness and indifference. He desires us to “view
 “an army at the sacking of a town,
 “and see what observation, or sense of
 “moral principles, or what touch of
 “conscience (they feel) for all the
 “outrages they do. Robberies, murders, rapes, are the sports of men set
 “at liberty from *censure*.” All the other cruelties which he continues to describe in the same page, he very unnaturally presumes, to be done *without scruple, without any remorse at all*. Could any thing be more cruelly unjust to others, than to presume thus much? Could any thing be more unphilosophical? Unjust to others, because his own heart, I will believe for his honour, could
 never

never exhibit to himself a capability of perpetrating the crimes he mentions, *without scruple, or without any remorse at all*. Unphilosophical, because, lightly deeming them the *sports* of men set at liberty from *censure*, he does not endeavour to investigate their causes, and shew them to be the effects, of what, they really are effects: in war, of furious passions, heated imaginations, and turbulent appetites: in the other cases, of gloomy and debasing superstitions; of strong fears of shame or want; or, of some other perverted affection, or urgent and forcible passion. But why he should presume, that after such actions men *feel no remorse at all*, I know not: it is undoubtedly a mere presumption without any rational evidence: for, I am certain Mr. Locke could

could have no evidence of any such thing in himself.

It is true, indeed, that while men continue under the influence of strong affections, violent passions, or enthusiastic illusions, they are but little sensible of the operations of conscience within them: but to infer from hence, that they have no *conscience*, no internal *moral sense*, would certainly be a very hasty, and injudicious conclusion: because, we might with as much reason infer, they have, no eyes, no ears, no feeling; for, under the influence of such affections, passions, and illusions, men frequently can neither, see, hear or feel.—I gave an assenting motion.

When we speak, said he, more within compass of our own experience
and

and knowledge of human nature; we can speak with more certainty, and with better evidence, to ourselves, to our friends, and to those who are of the same nation, or of the same quarter of the world with ourselves. But when we range about the earth, with voyagers and travellers, who are generally but too well disposed to fancy things to be wonderful and extraordinary, which they are unused to; and who are, most of them, but very ill-qualified to give us just accounts of the laws, customs, and religions of nations; who, if they were qualified, seldom stay long enough any where, either to learn the language or understand the manners of the people whom they visit; and, who, can only judge, and that grossly, of the effects which
come

come under their observation, but of whose causes they must often be ignorant, or but very incompetent judges; I say when we range about the earth with them, taking their strange accounts, for indubitable facts, we must surely be very well inclined to swallow any thing to serve our present purpose.

The truth is this, that if there were such nations, such creatures in the form of men, as these monster-loving voyagers tell us of; and as Mr. Locke seems so easily to believe there are; and who could perpetrate, as he assumes, all the unnatural barbarities he names, *without scruple, or without any remorse at all*; the only rational inference to be drawn from it, is, *that they are not of the same species with ourselves*: for they, most undoubtedly, differ extremely
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from all that we know of humanity within the compass of our own experience, and of our own internal feelings. In short, any unprejudiced man would find it as easy to believe, that there were whole nations born deaf or blind, or without any of the senses.

I must confess, replied I, after what has been said, on the universality of the senses, and of the moral sense; and after what Mr. Locke himself advances, concerning the impossibility of men's understanding each other in discourse, unless their simple ideas were the same; I think, there can be no doubt of his mistake in this question. However, with your leave, I will still trouble you a little longer.

Mr. Locke, after explaining to us
the

the natures of *pain* and *pleasure**; and informing us that, “ these like other
 “ simple *ideas* cannot be described nor
 “ their names defined; the way of
 “ knowing them being, as of the
 “ simple *ideas* of the senses, only by
 “ experience:” concludes in the next section, “ things then are good or evil
 “ only in reference to pleasure or pain.”
 You mention this; no doubt, said he, as a thing, about which, you are not satisfied. And it is certainly, in a *moral sense*, but a very gross account of *good* and *evil*: and even in a *physical sense* it will not bear a scrutiny.

Though it be true, that pain or pleasure do, immediately or ultimately, result from all our actions, as moral agents; yet to conclude generally, that things are good or evil, *only* in

* Essay, p. 135.

reference to pleasure or pain ; is a very considerable error. For, in a moral view, things are really good, or really evil, according as they serve or injure, or tend to serve or injure, the true interests of humanity ; independently of the pain or pleasure, that may accompany them. Pleasure or pain, simply considered, do not *constitute* what is morally good, or evil, in our nature : they are *only concomitants* of our good, or evil, actions : and more often ultimately, than immediately. For the pains of vice, and the pleasures of virtue, are never so sensibly felt in the pursuit, as after the accomplishment.

Many things are morally good, and productive of the best moral effects, although accompanied with much *pain* and anxiety. As, when our affections
are

are difordered and misplaced, and our indulged passions are become turbulent and unruly, so that the oppressed voice of nature can hardly be heard in us ; who is not sensible, that nature thus overstrained and thrown out of her true and proper course, cannot be brought back again to a due temper, and just balance, without much *painful* attention and perseverance ? Things, therefore, are not morally good or evil, *only* in reference to pleasure or pain. And as much may be said physically, and with as good reasons : for, there are many *painful* and troublesome operations in phyfic, which are very conducive, and even quite necessary to the *good* and health of the body.—True, said I. But do you, then, deny, that pain is *evil*, and that pleasure is *good*,

H in

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in an abstracted sense ? In these abstruse questions, replied he, we are apt to be puzzled by the abuse of words ; and the present difficulty is of that sort. That *pain* is *grievous*, there can be no doubt : and if we confine the sense of the word *evil*, to signify *grievous* only, then *pain* is *evil* : but when we extend the sense of the word *evil*, and make it signify *all evil, moral and physical*, or leave it to signify, indeterminately, what every one fancies to be *evil* ; then to say that *pain* is *evil*, is not true. *Pain* is *that sort of evil*, which is *grievous* to the sufferer ; but *pain*, as we have shewn, both morally and physically, is frequently productive of *very great good* to mankind. So *pleasure*, abstractedly, is *delightful* : which, indeed, is only saying, that pleasure is
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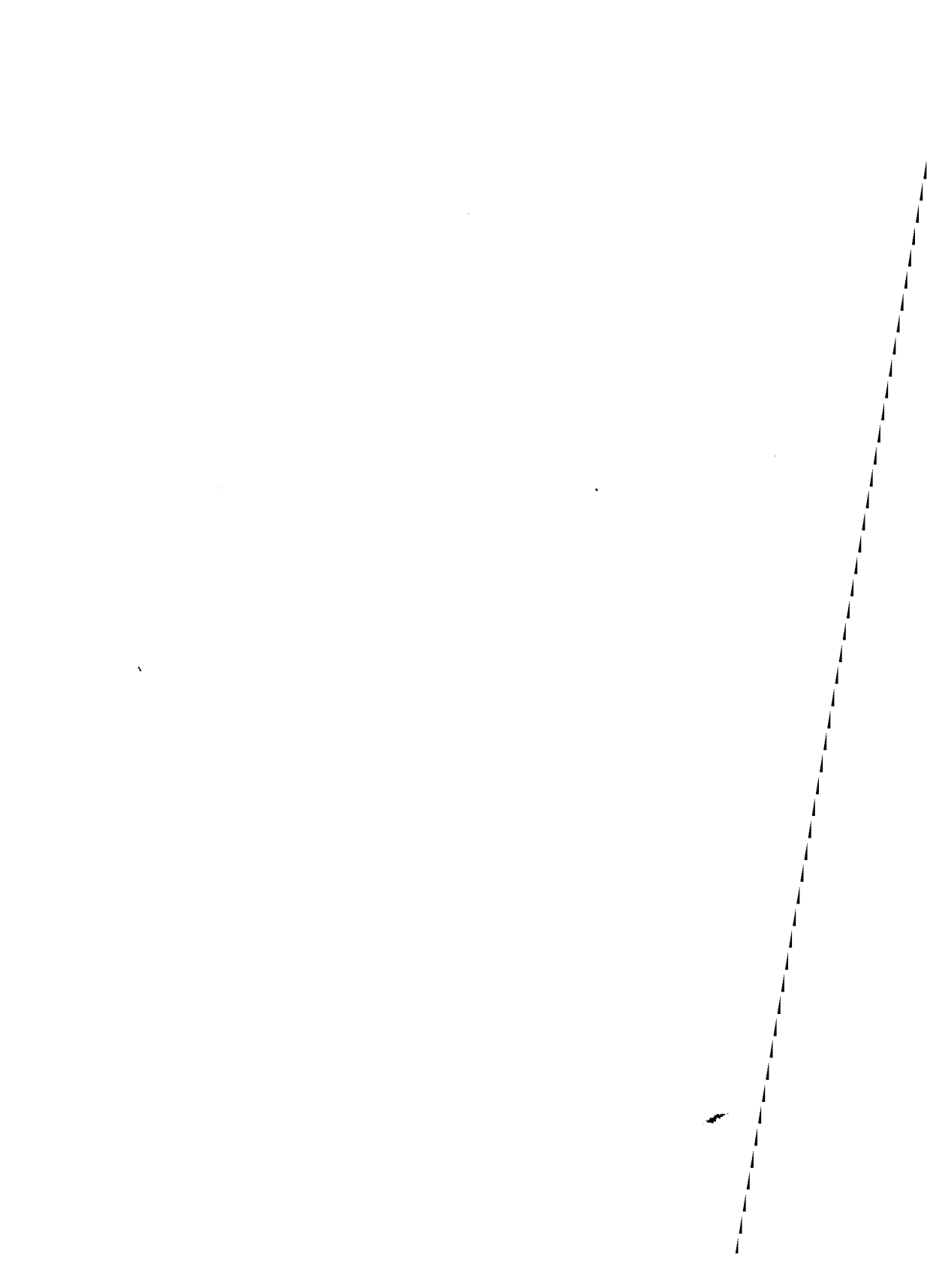
DIALOGUE III. 99

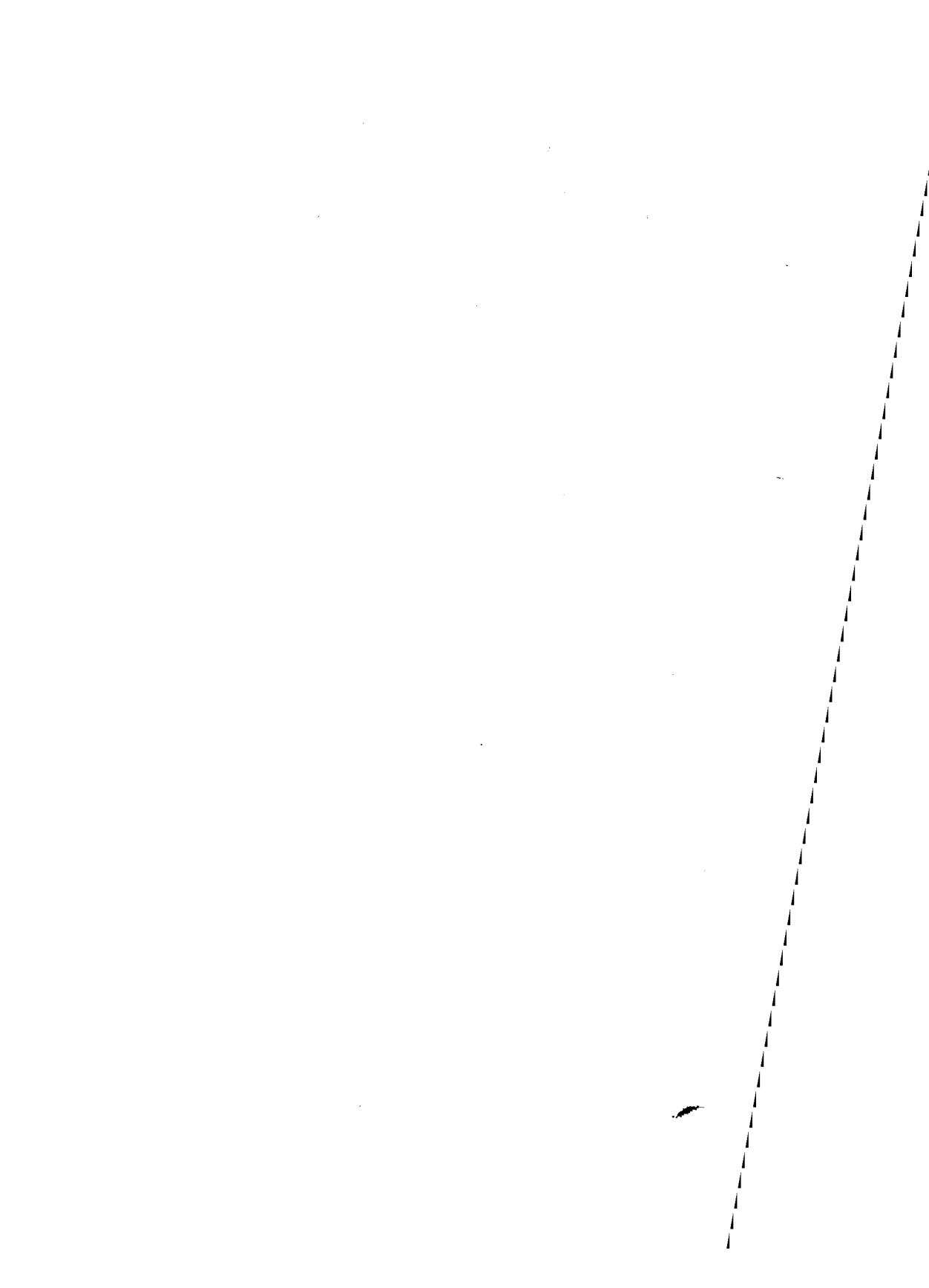
what it is. But when we say, that *pleasure* is *good* ; that must depend upon the signification we give to the word *good*. If by *good*, we mean only *pleasant*, then, it is indisputable : but if by *good*, we mean *morally right, just, or reasonable* ; or, in a physical sense, *conducive to health* ; nothing can be more clearly false.

Here we were interrupted by the presence of the ladies who came out to meet us ; when our conversation turning upon more agreeable things, our discourses on these subjects ended, and were not renewed, during my stay in the country.

F I N I S.

左八





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